1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

In summary, then, the methods were those traditionally associated with social anthropology, namely a long period in the field, learning the language, getting to know the people on a face to face basis, while participating, observing, and asking questions about the local social life. This is the basic experience from which the material described in this book is drawn.

Ethnography and Theory

By definition a case study such as this involves a description of the way of life of a people. However, no description is ever complete, nor is it a sheer listing of facts. The facts are related to one another, and many are left out. The basis for selection is, whether he knows it or not, a net result of the writer's theories and his biases. In this present work I have decided to describe what I consider to be the most important aspect of Kanuri society, and by this I mean those features which are its most determinant or causal aspects. This kind of approach can be seen more clearly when put into the form of a question phrased as follows: What are the set of organized activities by which the Kanuri of Bornu have adapted to their environment, and created means for the maintenance, continuity, and evolution of their society? Specifically, I have tried to answer this question by showing how each of the major sectors of Kanuri social life, the family, the household, the individual life experience, the political, and the economic systems, are related to one another, through their use of the household organization and its modes of behavior. The household is a model, and a building block as well, upon which the rest of the complicated activities of the Bornu society rests. I will come back to this point in the concluding chapter after having described the way in which the society actually works as a "system," or an organized whole, in accordance with this theory. However it should be noted that I have excluded religion and ceremonial life as "major sectors." For purposes of this report I consider them superfluous to the problem outlined above and have therefore mentioned them only when such material seems necessary. Even then they are integrated into other sectors and not treated separately.

It is up to the reader to ask whether or not I have made a convincing case by using this theory, or whether these facts could be explained in ways other than the manner they are interpreted here. If skepticism holds firm, the reader should ask whether my interpretation would be weakened if facts not presented here were described. He should also ask himself what these facts might be, and how he would go about collecting them. Ethnography is in one sense a naïve undertaking, especially for a society as complicated and ancient as that of the Kanuri. How can we ever say we have adequately described a whole society of nearly one million people whose traditions go back a thousand years? Obviously we can't. And so we attempt instead to capture its essence. In what is to follow I have tried to do just that. If I am wrong, or naïve, or illogical, I am also of the anthropological faith which preaches that the attempt to understand a human society through fieldwork is a scientifically useful one besides being one of the most profound experiences that life has to offer.

121 members of differing groups are no longer secure in their expectations from others. Though the larger cultural goals may continue to operate, groups may find that previously unattainable goals are now within reach. Though the nature of sanctions may remain the same, individuals are uncertain when they might anticipate sanctions. In choosing a particular path to achieve his goals, an individual may find that his behavior towards others brings about sanctions. He then must determine whether he can achieve his goals despite these sanctions, and whether the goals are worth the difficulties which are thus brought about, or whether he must abandon behavior of that sort.

B. The Nature of the Data.

• 12 The data on which the present study is based lie along two dimensions, social structure and acculturation. The manner in which data was chosen for study and collected for each of these variables will be discussed in the following section.

1. Delineating community social structure.

124 Eight groups and categories were selected for analysis. These certainly do not exhaust the total number of social groups and categories to be found in the community of Geidam. They merely represent eight clearly definable social units, each operating within a distinctive sphere of Kanuri culture. These eight groups and categories are themselves resultant from the interaction of variables which bring about community social

12 Besides the usual anthropological procedure of participant observation, two other methods were used in obtaining information on economic life in Bornu. Firstly, a sample of seventy-five cultivators, chosen partly by their local political leaders and partly by personal consent,(1) was observed and questioned by a field assistant on agricultural production, food consumption, livestock and land tenure. The sample was drawn from three towns: Magumeri, Ngubura and Chingowa: each roughly six miles from the other points of a triangle. Farm plots were measured off, dates of planting, weeding and harvesting were recorded, and the produce from one acre of millet and one of groundnuts weighed for each cultivator. As reported by the farmers themselves, and checked by the interviewer, the sample consisted of the following occupational groupings:

[115]

TABLE X

Occupation	Number	Percentage of Sample
Farmers	25	33.3
Craftsmen #	16	21.3
Traders	17	22.7
Political and Religious Specialists	17	22.7
	75	100.0

Includes 4 "herders" - persons who tend other peoples livestock, mostly sheep and goats, for a fee, as their non-farming specialty.

Secondly, using intensive interviews and observation, the annual budgets of twenty-two household heads were constructed by extrapolating from daily and weekly figures on income and expenditure in cash and kind, as well as reported crop production.(2) No sampling procedures were used in gathering this material, since the traditional method of gaining rapport with informants was a major criterion in

(1) They were primarily involved in a demonstration of the potential improvement of farm yields with the use of superphosphate fertilizer.

[114] (2) A similar but more extensive (numerically) method has been used by Smith, M.G., The Economy of Hausa Communities of Zaria, 1955.

12 in choosing households. (1) An attempt was made, however, to obtain some degree of representativeness of the Bornu rural economy. Thus the budgets range from that of a single young man, just barely supporting himself in food and clothing, to the expenditures (not income) of a District Chief.

128 Before moving on to a detailed analysis of Kanuri production, consumption and distribution, it is necessary to give a brief outline of 592 Kanuri economic activities. The household group is the basic economic unit. This group is a nuclear or polygynous family living sometimes in a compound, at other times forming part of a larger compound. Its economic independence of other units depends upon whether or not it is a part of a larger extended household organization. But whether or not this is the case, the family unit under its male head maintains its own farmland, engages in its own dry season work, owns its own tools, animals, cooks its own food, and is treated as a taxable unit by the local political leaders.

462 592 Within the household, women cook, draw water for the household, help on the farm (unless they are in seclusion), raise garden crops in the compound, thresh, pound, and grind grain, sweep and clean the compound, keep chickens and ducks, and engage in petty trade. The major contribution of women to the household is their labour in cooking [434] and help on the farm. Income derived from the sale of garden produce or the sale of cooked foods are considered to belong to the woman herself.

[114] (1) For experimental validation of the reliability of this method see:
(a) Honigman, J. and I. Sampling Reliability in Ethnological Field Work, SJA, Vol. 11, (1955) pp. 282-287.
(b) Honigman, J.J. and Carrera, R., Another Experiment in Sample Reliability, SJA, Vol. 13, (1957) pp. 99-102.